



News-Sun file photo

A GROUP of 10 American white pelicans rests on a sandbar this spring on the north side of C.J. Brown Reservoir. The birds were drying their wings in the breeze. They are rarely seen in Ohio.

Reservoir honor is for the birds

By **SUSAN M. COVER**

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The C.J. Brown Reservoir is to birds what Motel 6 is to weary travelers — a place to grab a bite to eat and a few hours sleep before the journey begins again.

For its role in the avian hospitality business, the reservoir is being honored this week as an Important Bird Area.

"It's because it gets a large congregation of waterfowl who use it as a migratory rest stop," said John Ritzenthaler, director of habitat conservation for Audubon Ohio.

The reservoir is one of 96 areas in the state to earn the designation.

Over the years, the Army Corps of Engineers has made an effort to

make the area bird friendly, said Park Ranger Brian Menker.

"We have several places we've tried to bring back a grassland habitat," he said.

The Corps of Engineers works with Buck Creek State Park to attract birds and waterfowl to the lake and surrounding forests. They've been working to rid the park of non-native species such as honeysuckle, a battle that will continue, Menker said.

In April, 19 American white pelicans spent a few days at the reservoir after they probably were blown off course during migration. The siting drew a flock of birders to the area.

Other birds, such as the Bell's vireo, black terns, sedge wrens and

bald eagles, make the reservoir a notable bird area. A variety of ducks also live there, along with many other water birds, Ritzenthaler said.

"It's increasingly important in these days of development to have places where birds can stop and refuel," he said.

A brief ceremony to declare the park an Important Bird Area will begin at 7:30 p.m. today at the visitor center overlook. It will be followed by the annual owl release from 8 to 9 p.m. Betty Ross from the Glen Helen Raptor Center will release a few rehabilitated screech owls.

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